

Open Research Online

The Open University's repository of research publications and other research outputs

“Deep in the forest, something stirred...” Examining the influence of community on the organizing practices of a festival.

Conference or Workshop Item

How to cite:

Lucas, Mike J. (2012). “Deep in the forest, something stirred...” Examining the influence of community on the organizing practices of a festival. In: British Academy of Management Annual Conference, 11-13 Sep 2012, University of Cardiff.

For guidance on citations see [FAQs](#).

© 2012 The Author



<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Version: Version of Record

Copyright and Moral Rights for the articles on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. For more information on Open Research Online's [data policy](#) on reuse of materials please consult the policies page.

oro.open.ac.uk

“Deep in the forest, something stirred...” Examining the influence of community on the organizing practices of a festival.

**Mike J. Lucas
Faculty of Business and Law
The Open University**

m.j.lucas@open.ac.uk

**Contact address:
The Open University
Faculty of Business and Law
Michael Young Building
Walton Hall
Milton Keynes**

Track: Organisation Studies

Word count 6762

“Deep in the forest, something stirred...” Examining the influence of community on the organizing practices of a festival.

Summary

While the organisation of community festivals and their socio-economic impacts have been studied for some time, they remain largely unexplored by management researchers. The festival is an important example of organisation as practice - the “practical ordering of heterogeneous human, material and symbolic elements” (Nicolini, 2009). - versus the conventional assumption of organisation as entity. It allows the relationships between the social practices of organising, the cultural context of these practices and the development of practitioner identities to be observed more closely.

This paper is based on the findings of a research study, undertaken over three years, in which I observed the organisation of a community-based culture festival in rural central Sweden. My study set out to examine some of the details of the organization of a specific festival by a specific village community to explore some of the complex links between the two broader fields of social practice of organizing and community respectively. This paper focuses on two particular aspects of the study, namely the nature of social interactions amongst community members involved in volunteering their time to deliver the festival, and the material and practical symbols of community identity evident, to examine how they influenced the organizing practices of the festival.

Introduction

Between 2008 and 2011, I undertook ethnographic field research to observe the organization of an annual cultural festival which takes place in 15 different villages and sites over a large area of forest in a central region of Sweden. It is one of many such cultural events whose growth in popularity across Europe and rural US during recent years, has been particularly documented in rural Sweden (Ekman, 1999; Aldskogius, 1993). Its broad goals, understood by the volunteers, participants and visitors alike, are to highlight the rich folk-culture heritage of the region, which continues to attract artists, musicians, performers, photographers and crafts experts with regional, national and in some cases international standing, and to promote the area as a tourist destination. In theoretical terms my interest is in how the organizing practices of the festival relate to the social, cultural and economic relations embedded in the routine life of a host community. This is a complex issue to analyse, and one which led me to narrow the focus of my study on a small organising group based in one of the participating villages. The central question which this paper aims to address is how is the community both symbolised through and constituted in the organizing practices of the festival?

An examination of this type is based on three epistemological foundations. Firstly, the philosophical foundation of the study is that organization must be viewed not as an entity but as a social process involving the “practical ordering of heterogeneous human, material and symbolic elements” (Nicolini, 2009), or in other words a set of social and cultural practices. Such a view builds on the call of Barley and Kunda (2001), to try to “make sense of post-bureaucratic organizing” through detailed studies of the work of those involved. The festival offers an interesting example of organizing outside the confines of permanency and formal structures associated with bureaucratic organisations, instead focussing on work practices based around knowledge of routines only lightly regulated by an agreed framework of processes, and relations embedded within the social life of a community.

The second, theoretical foundation of the study lies in the emerging field of practice theory, summarised so eloquently by Feldman and Orlikowski (2011). This highlights the importance of practice to the development of social processes, drawing in particular on the work of Bourdieu (1977, 1990), Giddens (1976, 1979, 1984) and more recently Schatzki (2001, 2005). Orlikowski (2010) advocates an approach to researching practice which involves three interrelated elements: “an empirical focus on how people act in organizational contexts, a theoretical focus on understanding relations between the actions people take and the structures of organizational life, and a philosophical focus on the constitutive role of practices in producing organizational reality” (Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011, p.1240). My own theoretical interest differs in that, rather than focusing on the relations between organizing practices and structure, I have focused on the emergence of the cultural practices of organizing linked to social interaction within a community-based group. So while agreeing with Feldman and Orlikowski’s (2011) view that practices are constitutive in producing organizational reality, we must recognise that the actions of practitioners can also be seen as in some senses symbolic.

Linstead (1997) has argued that management, by which he includes “a part of organizing any sort of activity, information or informal group” is an inherently social process which involves “the negotiation and construction of meaning to get things done” (p.87). In this he includes the recognition of thought and emotion, the deployment of symbolic artefacts, symbolic and rhetorical expressions of meaning, and the improvisational construction of identities. In order to explore this fully he advocates “event studies...investigated by immersion methods to pursue the ambiguous relationship between the symbolic and the concrete, and the meanings which members attribute to the events.” Hence, the third epistemological foundation for the study lies in the ethnographic approach adopted in my research methodology. The intention is that this leads to the development of theory rooted in the authentic representation of the practices of organizing. This in turn explains why much of this paper presents a ‘thickly’ descriptive account of this part of my research. It reveals something of the balance of the symbolic and the constitutive nature of constituent actions, an important step for me in establishing the basis of a practice theory of organizing linked to community and identity.

Method

The basis of my research is an evolving ethnographic study which I have been conducting with increasing intensity since my first encounter with the festival in 2008. The study is evolving in a practical sense because I have been for the last three festival celebrations, part of the volunteer group whose practice I have been documenting, and as I have a long-term commitment to the community (as a holiday home owner in the region) I envisage a continuation of this work into the future. It is also evolving in an epistemological sense. As Denzin and Lincoln (2010) attest “the processes that define the practices of interpretation and representation are always ongoing, emergent, unpredictable and unfinished” (p.563). The study has involved the production of written descriptions of several aspects of the groups’ activities in which I have participated (and thus observed), the transcription of in situ interviews with co-participants and organizers based on this and other festival sites, the notes of events and informal conversations, and also, crucially, an emerging reflective account of my own emotional and intellectual responses to my involvement in the festival. This method distinguishes it from earlier studies which have examined the impacts of cultural festivals on host communities. These have tended to be of two types - macro-level studies linked to quantitative indicators of the community’s socio-economic development in a mixed method approach, or intermediate level studies drawing on more conventional qualitative interviews with representative members of the stakeholder groups involved. In my own study the focus has been on observing, at the micro level, the behaviours, interactions, relationships and opinions of individuals.

My own position, as a participant in the practice being studied, has provided me with opportunities for close observation of these factors, seemingly in the style of conventional ethnographic studies. However the study has had several less conventional elements, not least of which is that I am personally involved as a practitioner-subject and therefore have felt the need to constantly question the sources of my interpretation in parallel to my recording of events. This approach was partly informed by Alvesson’s

(2003) suggestions for close-up studies, which he termed self-ethnography. Given the highly interpretive way in which data is ‘constructed’, the combination of realist observation and documentation, and reflective self-criticism is intended as a means of “controlling ‘subjectivity’” (p.183). The aim of course is to ensure an appropriate balance has been struck in the data gathering, between social authenticity and academic rigour. Moeran (2009) referred to this as the ‘observant participant’ position, which requires the researcher to consider themselves as part of the research. This is why the account of my involvement with the community’s work and its impact on me, which I have now come to characterise as an auto-ethnography, has played a much more fundamental role in the study as a key source of data. This is the subject of a separate paper (Lucas, 2012b).

The subject of the study is also quite distinctive in that the festival in question is a multi-site one which stretches across quite a wide geographical area with no discernible population centre – indeed a number of interviewees have noted that part of its purpose is to celebrate the ‘spaciousness’ of the area. Most festival studies focus on single place festivals (e.g. Ekman 1999; Quinn 2003; Costa 2001) or where multi-site festivals have been examined (e.g. De Bres and Davis, 2001), they have focused on macro-level impact and data gathered across several sites. Several villages participate in the festival I am studying with none particularly central to the festival. While the study itself was not a multi-site ethnography, some data drawn from a number of other participating villages has enabled me to engage in what Nicolini (2009) refers to as ‘zooming out’, or maintaining a sense of the overall context and scope of the research subject. It provides contextual information on the overall impact of the festival on the regional supra-community of which all the participating sites comprise.

The festival and its practices

The festival was established in 2001 by a locally based photographer with keen interest in celebrating the folk culture and inhabitants’ working lives in the area of forest in which he lived. It is partly funded by a European Union grant for the encouragement of tourism in economically depressed regions. It takes place over three days in late July each year, at the height of the Swedish summer holiday season, when many middle class Swedish families migrate from their urban winter homes to forest and coastal areas for lengthy vacation periods. It is also the middle of the holiday season in many northern European states when many (if not all) of the holiday homes in the region will be occupied, either by their owners or on a rental basis. Many of these are from Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands, as well as from more urbanised parts of Sweden and Norway.

The region is a large tract of managed forest which lies across the borders of two of Sweden’s administrative regions (Län). There are around 15 villages or hamlets which participate in the festival, although the exact number changes from year to year. Some of the villages host a single festival site with a small number of craft displays, art exhibitions or second hand stalls, while others house several sites. Sites include the grounds and barns of private houses (usually with some historic interest), community centres (bygdegårds) and historic homestead buildings (hembygsgårds). The Festival Organizing Committee (FOC) consists of a chair, a secretary, a treasurer and two other permanent members plus a representative from each of the main participating villages.

Each participating village has its own festival planning group including their representative on the FOC.

The focus of my study was the organizing practices of festival amongst a small volunteer group based in one of the participating villages. The volunteer group is made up of a mix of local friends, family and a small number of holiday home owners, who volunteer some of their holiday time in order to participate in the organization of the village's contribution. The group comprised 16 members, all with differing geographical and emotional ties to the village, and differing roles in the festival's planning and delivery. Nine members are permanent year-round residents, four are holiday home owners and three are related family members. Integral to their practice as organisational members are a number of behaviours, interactions and material artefacts which, I argue, symbolize the ways in which the community interpret the festival and its goals.

Each member of the organizing group has varying degrees of involvement, based on their residential status. A number of sub-processes can be identified in the practice of festival organization, linked to the different temporal phases of the festival's planning and delivery, and these can be used to identify individual member roles:–

- Village representation on and liaison with the Festival Organizing Committee – this is undertaken by one member at a time and necessity dictates this must be a permanent, year-round resident as there are at least 6 committee meetings per year between January and July, with a post-festival meeting to agree final financial matters.
- Roster planning and assembly – While this can be shared, again it requires some liaison with the Festival Organising Committee and draws on regional social and business connections. Hence it is undertaken by 6 or 7 of the permanent residents.
- Site clearance and preparation - This happens over a period in the early summer months of May and June. It involves ground clearance and removal of obstacles which have either grown since last year or are part of the site which has been adopted for use since the previous year. This tends to involve whoever is around, usually a mixture of permanent and holiday residents who can contribute to the physical work.
- Site layout and organisation – In the weekend prior to the festival the site is laid out with marquee plots designated and exhibition spaces allocated. This also includes the erection of the second-hand sale marquee and food servery bar with seating and overhead awning. The precise layout can take 3 or 4 days to agree and at various times involves almost all of the volunteer group
- Running the stalls – During the days of the festival itself, the second hand sale and food servery is staffed on a rota basis by all the Swedish speaking members of the group.
- Taking down and clearing away – This is generally done on the Sunday after the festival has ended by broadly the same group who cleared and prepared the site in early summer. Many of the older members and members of their family do not tend to take part in this.

Despite the differing levels of practical involvement what is noticeable amongst the group is their emotional commitment to each other and to the village, which the organisation of the festival allows them to display.

In the context of the organization of the festival as a whole the village group which is the prime focus of my study appeared to recognise that it has relatively little power. The village has only one representative member of FOC and a festival site with little historical significance to the region (though a notable place of natural beauty). The village itself was part of the development of the industrial supply chain of a large steel company during the mid-twentieth century, whose economic status has declined considerably since the 1970s. Consequently the village has slowly depopulated to around 17 permanent, year-round residents occupying 9 of the 21 residential dwellings. The rest are owned as holiday homes and/or short-term rental dwellings. Only 8 of the permanent residents are below statutory retirement age. There are three small businesses based in the village but none provide a stable source of employment beyond their respective owners. Hence there is little economic power in the village. No specific individual claims leadership of the community and, though some older members of the group clearly have greater stocks of social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984) at the individual level, the nature of the group's practice indicates a philosophy of inclusivity and mutual responsibility. The festival, for our volunteer group, presents an opportunity to socialise with each other, meet friends from neighbouring villages and regular visitors, and to generate some additional funds for further community activities. It is in essence a community social ritual. However, while the group holds little in the way of institutional power, and appears to have little cultural capital on which to trade, it could be argued that through its organizing practices the group enact a distinctive village identity, linked to community inclusivity and pluralism, which allows them access to alternative power claims.

A useful comparator is a larger neighbouring village, which is also the most populous in the region. This village houses around 50 or so permanent year-round residents and at least as many holiday home/second home owners. It is also a key centre of tourism growth in the central forest region with two companies owning camping and holiday cabin sites, whose owners work hard to offer services and maintain networks for year-round outdoor activities such as multi-site canoe expeditions, wildlife 'safari' tours and winter sports holidays. The village also houses a substantial public community centre building which hosts a variety of activities from adult classes to a small gym, and a picturesque 19th century wooden church which attracts touring visitors in its own right. For this village the festival is an opportunity to leverage its relative economic dynamism and promote its tourism potential. There are two main sites used – the community centre and grounds, and a site adjacent to the church – but a number of private house owners have set up small sites of their own (in 2011 there were six sites in total). The bulk of festival participants in the village are small, commercial craft businesses using it as a retail market for revenue generation and promotion. The two main sites play host to around 35 such producers each year with another 12 or so spread amongst the 'loppis' (bric-a-brac stalls) and impromptu cafés of the private sites. This is also testament to the social capital of the village organising group as the stallholders come from quite a wide area of central Sweden (the furthest has probably travelled 150 km or so for the three day

event). This is consistently by far the biggest site of the festival in terms of exhibitor/stallholders participants and by number of visitors. However it is attended by very few if any artists and its links to the historical traditions are less explicit than some other smaller sites. It is viewed by our village group as the 'craft market' of the festival and has a low stock of cultural capital by comparison to other sites.

'Festive sociability': patterns of social interaction in festival organization

The links between festival and community have been explored by sociologists and anthropologists for most of the last century. Many studies are based on the assumption that festival (or festivity) is a social practice which emphasises the informal, non-work aspects of community life. The concept of festivity is linked to Bakhtin's (1984) examination of the European historical tradition of the carnival - a suspension of everyday working life to engage in "ritual activities for the purpose of popular folk merriment" (p.219). He elaborated several examples from historical records of behaviours and activities he described as "carnavalesque". Falassi (1987) defined festival as "a sacred or profane time of celebration marked by special observances" (p.2). Costa (2001), in assessing modernist sociological approaches, developed the concept of festive sociability to describe the distinctive behaviours evident amongst participants during festival times. These incorporate "humour, play, communal eating, sociable work, satiric criticisms, parades etc." (p.542), the combination of which differs from the pattern of routine, everyday social interactions experienced in modern lives and communities. However more recent analyses have challenged the view that festival involves a suspension of community practice. Getz et al (2010) defined festivals in the more modern context as "themed public celebrations" which acquire a recognisable organisational culture which represents an active celebration of "community values, ideologies, identity and continuity" (p.30).

Costa (2011) asserts that festival is associated with the suspension of everyday routines, particularly those associated with work, in order to engender what he terms 'festive sociability'. The "play" and "parade" elements of this, are emphasised as a core value of the festival at the regional level. It is an arts-based event comprising a range of exhibitions and performances across the region, particularly of folk-culture and place-related pieces. The front cover of the festival brochure for the last two years has contained the strap-line that the festival celebrates the "art, photography, decorative crafts, music and food of (the region)" which could be seen as examples of 'playful' exhibition and performance. As there is no single centre large or significant enough to parade through, this element of Costa's concept is probably most closely represented by the final evening concert of the festival at which the final afternoon crowds and many of the village volunteers gather. Although this is held 15km away from our own village, two members of the village organising group have been closely involved in running this event, and several others have helped to deliver it for the last three years. In my diary account I note that the closing event is "a traditional focal point for the musical/performance aspect" of the festival and that it is held "on the sunset facing shore of the small circular lake..., located roughly at the centre of (the festival region), just outside (one of the larger village centres)". Both the location and the event programme

are intended to reflect the spirit of the festival, and particularly the region whose folk-culture it celebrates. Acts in the last three years have included a range of folk musicians, poets and performers either based in the region or with repertoires which symbolised aspects of the festival's link to regional identity. The audience at the event is always drawn from the visitor, exhibitor and volunteer population who have been enacting the festival during the previous three days, in the way that a parade is attended at a single site or city festival.

At the village level, festive sociability is borne out by some aspects of the group's practice. It is much in evidence in the way that tasks are undertaken - at a leisurely pace, with considerable injection of humour and breaks for communal eating. The organising group meetings and all the group's work periods in preparing and clearing the site are light-hearted affairs, each session interspersed with obligatory 'fika' breaks for coffee, snacks and further friendly banter. During a meeting in 2010, the task of determining of food prices for display at the food servery bar was undertaken by two members who could not help provoking a mock debate about the relative merits of moose burgers (älzburgare) and ordinary hamburgers in order to establish precisely how much price difference there should be between the two. The älbzburgare always sell out during the festival period, so there was some humorous speculation from the rest of the group about profiteering by the food servery.

There is a strong sense that the volunteer group engages in their practice imbued with festive sociability, and is aware of the need to support this in the way in which the village site is organised and run. The village festival site is also constructed to maximise festive social interaction between villagers, stallholders and visitors, accompanied by food and drink prepared by the villagers. Visitors are welcomed into an al fresco food area flanked on two sides by market-type stalls and sitting adjacent to a marquee housing a charity second-hand (loppis) sale. While eating snacks such as the ever popular älbzburgare, hamburgers, hot dogs (korv), home-baked bread and cakes, and drinking coffee, soft drinks or the occasional beer, visitors can sit chatting while enjoying views of the lake, or browse around the community fishing club building, in which artists and crafts-people display their wares. Many visitors take a break from their tour of the festival for something to drink or eat at the village, and feedback from several 2011 visitors indicated that this was a particularly valued aspect of it as a festival site. During the festival weekend itself, volunteers wear plain black T-shirts printed with a pair of fluorescent cartoon eyes and the legend '(Village name) by Night', symbolising the self-mocking humour of the group in considering the nightlife of the village somewhat dark and lifeless.

However the humour and friendly banter cannot disguise the fact that members of the group have simply replaced the paid labour of their normal jobs for the unpaid labour of their voluntary festival roles. Six of the group take time out of their working lives and seven give up part of their formal leave from work period in order to participate in the organisation of the festival. This implies that the festival's value to the community goes much deeper than providing a break from the everyday. Several aspects of the group's practice, particularly the links between the planning group and the volunteer group

indicate that the organisation and delivery of the festival is an important focal point in the social and cultural life of the community. The village inhabitants have emotional ties to each other and to the physical maintenance of the village infrastructure which bears out in considerable ongoing work. This is imbued with an ongoing sense of community sociability, which the festival amplifies.

Two major influences on the nature and patterns of social interaction are the socio-demographic profile of the community and the climate. The annual, cyclical nature of social life in such a rurally isolated region, is acutely affected by the extreme seasonal weather variations. The patterns and volume of social interaction during the lengthy, extremely cold winters experienced by the regions' communities differs significantly from that of the short, intense, light-soaked summers. In part this is because the village population and its festival volunteer group comprise a significant proportion of holiday home owners, whose visits are mainly focused on the summer period between May and September. In part it is also because a high proportion of the permanent, year-round residents are ageing and consequently less mobile during the winter months. For both these groups the festival is part of the fundamental 'routine' of their community practice. For the holiday residents it supports their integration into this small, intimate community, reflecting their evolving emotional attachment. For the older residents, most of whom are retired, it is a focus for their social interaction with younger residents and in-comers, and the involvement of four retirees in the planning activities symbolises the continued desire for such community routines. This is very significant in the development of the festival as a whole. As one of the participating artists at a neighbouring village noted, the older, retired residents involved in the festival bring "idealism and enthusiasm" which provides significant impetus to the planning and running of the festival. Without the knowledge, labour and emotional commitment of this group it is unlikely the festival would have continued to run for so long.

A further element to this analysis lies in the economics of the festival. Any profits generated by the second-hand stall goes towards the village community fund (byalag), which funds a number of other community activities across the year, including visits to a well-known regional winter market and the renovation of the fishing club building. This suggests the festival is firmly embedded within the social and economic life of the village. The festive sociability which Costa highlights in his study of the festivals in Valencia, is interpreted in this Swedish setting not as a suspension of routine community life in favour of a completely different pattern of social interaction, but as part of a temporally cyclical pattern of routine community interaction. In other words, in the short life of the forest festival to date, festival organizing has become simply part of community life, not separate from it.

'A sense of place': symbolic capital and practitioner identities

De Bres and Davis (2001) establish community identity at the centre of festival practice. They put forward a model of community identification comprising the construction of group identity and place identity amongst community members, arguing that both could be strengthened by involvement in community festival activities. Other studies however (Jackson 1988; Marston 1984; Lewis and Pile 1996) have examined how participating

stakeholder groups use festival settings to assert their own particular notions of identity. The important issue this raises is about differing conceptions of community. This is represented in official promotional material for the festival as rooted in the region of forest in which it is enacted. This emphasises the artistic connections and a heritage linked to the social history of the forest. However village inhabitants view community from the position of their own home village, and it is their emotional ties to their neighbours which underpins much of the work undertaken by the group. Their efforts partly reflect their commitment to the 'corporate' ideals and organisation of the festival and partly their emotional attachment to their village. The link between festival practice and the development of participant identities is a complex one which tells us much about the group members' conceptions of community.

Latterly researchers such as Quinn (2003), and Crespi-Vallbona & Richards (2007) have focused on festivals as "contested fields of meaning, in which different groups or stakeholders try to utilise the symbolic capital of the event for their own ends" (Crespi-Vallbona & Richards, 2007). In the Swedish context Ekman (1999) noted the "revival of cultural celebrations in regional Sweden", placing this within a long-standing historical tradition of festivals in the region of Filipstad in central Sweden. She was however quick to recognise that some traditions are more recently created than others by "innovative thinking and development in local communities (with a)...combination of enthusiasts who have the courage to embark on new ventures and those who are aware of cultural heritage and local culture" (p.292). The conflicts and differences of opinion between these groups illustrate the issue of conflicting use of symbolic capital also evident in my study.

One of the key aims of the festival is to support the creation of a coherent regional community identity linked to a heightened sense of place, the notion of 'place identity' which De Bres and Davis (2001) discuss in their account. Set against this however are the research studies which indicates that festival organisation provides a platform for groups such as our volunteer group to assert their community identity at the more local, village level. The tension between the two competing conceptions of community conveyed here, and the relative degrees of identification with each can be viewed as an important factor in explaining some aspects of the practice of the group. Gieryn (2000) summarises this tension in his examination of place in sociological analysis. His assertion that "people and groups organised into coalitions actively accomplish places" (p.469) offers insight into the organisation of the festival and its goal of strengthening place identity, but as he also recognises, places are made "when ordinary people extract from continuous and abstract space a bounded, identified, meaningful, named and significant place."(p.471). So while a 'place' can be constructed through socio-political means, in this case in celebration of a shared cultural history in a festival, it is ascribed meaning by the individual actor based on their experience of it, in this case as part of their village community.

There is a strong sense of the construction of place identity in the festival brochure and promotional materials, and in the theming of the festival each year. The evocation of the forest region as a place of natural beauty, ecological significance and historical tradition

are all familiar themes from previous studies of rural community festivals. The natural and ecological elements are evident in a very high proportion of the art – mostly painting and some sculpture – exhibited at various festival sites, while there is a predominance among the exhibition sites themselves of historic, semi-restored agricultural buildings. Exhibitors and sellers display their artefacts and products amongst the worn and rusting agricultural tools hung and propped thoughtfully around these spaces in a cleverly curated experience. Many of the craft producers focus on the production of wooden artefacts, including ‘traditional’ items such as containers for the popular Swedish snack staple, the ‘wheel’ of cracker bread (knäckerbröd), bark-weave satchels and slippers similar to those used by past forest inhabitants. Also in evidence are several producers of hunting knives and novelty items made of elk materials (horn and pelts), of decorative metal ornaments and tools produced by traditional ‘black-smithing’ methods, and of hand-woven rugs, garments and soft toys. These reflect some of the major historic traditions and pre-occupations of the forest inhabitants, timber-craft, hunting, metal-work and home-weaving. In addition many of the musical and poetry performances of the festival highlight the history and folk-culture of the region, as does the food menu on each site, with its emphasis on the staples and specialities of the forest workers of the past.

While there is no historic barn as an exhibition space in our village, the volunteer group is committed to promoting this sense of place amongst its exhibitors and stallholders, which the core planning group in particular is responsible for assembling. There are always a small number of craft exhibitors who set up their own free-standing stalls. Two regular participants specialise in wooden and elk-horn novelty artefacts, and decorative metal items respectively, but over the period studied it has hosted a bark-weaver, a knife maker, a traditional baker and two makers of hand-made wooden furniture. The village has also hosted several artists over the four festival cycles I have witnessed, all of whom are landscape or wildlife painters who tend to focus on forest scenes and animals. Performances of acoustic music are organised for all three afternoons, delivered under a canvas awning or in the open air with the lakeshore as a backdrop. These have been a mixture of traditional regional folk music and more contemporary artists with a modern folk repertoire.

However, despite their commitment to the festival theme, and the co-construction of a regional identity/tradition with its neighbouring villages, the village group also seeks to assert their own independent community identity in a variety of ways. As has been stated, the organising group which make up the permanent core of the volunteers are responsible for the roster of exhibitors and stalls. Like all the village festival planning groups they draw upon personal and business contacts to assemble the majority of these, and do so semi-autonomously. A core part of the delivery of the festival involves the running of a food stall and a loppis stall, and most villages have at least one of each. Each food server in the festival has a fairly limited menu but our village menu contains a fairly distinctive range of sausages and burgers made from forest animal meat – mainly elk and wild boar - which is associated with the hunting tradition. It is the only server to offer such a range – most concentrate on only one main dish per day based on the traditional

forest workers fare, and several group members have expressed pride in the positive feedback from visitors about both the distinctiveness and the quality of the menu.

One of the clearest examples of the village asserting its autonomy in festival organisation is the role of two group members in the development of an aligned social event for snow scooter enthusiasts, involving trick-riding across a stretch of lake close to the village. This was ‘tagged on’ to the closing afternoon of the festival for the first time in 2010, partly as a novelty entertainment and partly as the revival of a previous event organised by a former resident of the village. By 2011 it had become a paying spectator event which lasted well into the evening and was almost certainly the best attended performance of the festival period. The event is not formally part of the festival programme and could hardly be described as being in the spirit of the festival in that it did not draw on the cultural history or utilise artistic modes of cultural expression to evoke a sense of place. Indeed the noise shatters the tranquillity of the village, and the crowd attending seem just as interested in getting drunk as watching the entertainment. A bar open this far inside the forest is a considerable novelty, one which a number of residents of neighbouring communities – especially those from the closest towns - seem happy to visit, particularly on a sunny Saturday afternoon. However there is no doubting the enthusiasm of a significant proportion of the younger population of the region for motor sports and particularly snowmobiles. Rates of ownership of snow scooters amongst the younger population of the region is very high and this event could be viewed a way of expressing their cultural commitment, albeit to a rather newer ‘tradition’.

The event itself is organised by a local snowmobile club based some 50km away on the region’s northern borders and the two group members involved, both middle-aged, male snowmobile enthusiasts, act as local event facilitators and rescue support for sunken snowmobiles and their riders. The rest of the group tolerate the event with a mixture of amusement at the antics of their compatriots and mild annoyance at the distraction. In 2010, the overlapping timing of the start of the snowmobile event and the end of the final day of the festival, caused one of the group to complain that it was “taking away customers from the village site”. This is highly debatable given the typical profiles of the two respective audiences, nevertheless it represents a strand of opinion which feels that the event is undermining the symbolic traditions which the festival embodies. The subsequent 2011 event was timetabled to start at a slightly later time, providing a degree of symbolic distance from the main festival activities.

Conclusion

It would appear from my study of the work of a small volunteer group that the organizing practices of the annual community festival to which they contribute is an amplification of two particular aspects of the relationship the members hold with the community to which they belong. Firstly the nature and patterns of their social interaction during the festival balances the ongoing patterns of the community with the serious practical obligations of contributing to the community’s survival as a social unit. The work is physically tiring, requires commitment of time and emotional engagement to each other and to the agreed processes, and at times it is an unwelcome additional burden during a busy working period or during well-earned holidays. Secondly festival organization provides acute

examples of the ways in which group members enact their community identities. While remaining committed to the festivals aim of constructing and conveying a sense of cross-community tradition rooted in the region-place, the group also strive to maintain a distance from it. The village's own values of egalitarian inclusiveness, free-spirited exuberance and commitment to each other's welfare are in many ways stronger than its connections to a more abstract place identity rooted in a broader social history. Indeed this tension is evident in several villages, where cultures of entrepreneurial individualism or artistic free expression vie with the festival's place-identity message.

The outcomes of the study set out in this paper indicate two possible areas of further investigation. The first is the relationship between community and organization in a broader sense. It raises some broader questions about the influence of communities on the practices of organization particularly in post-bureaucratic settings, like temporary and voluntary organizations as well as entrepreneurial networks. Communities of various types – occupational, professional, departmental, geographical, etc. - exist in a whole host of organisational situations. Viewed from the cultural perspective, the practices of organization are intersected by the evolving practices and traditions created in each of the contributing communities, sometimes challenging, changing or even superseding them

The second area for investigation is linked to the balance of symbolic meaning and constitutive intention which comprise the practices of organization. The festival I studied, can be viewed as a major initiative to create economic benefit and to represent a coherent sense of cultural identity within its host region. This is achieved not just through symbolic or representational activities such as the promotional materials or the artistic content, but through the active engagement of individuals and community groups in the organizing practices of the festival. The study confirms in part what some have already noted, that the practice of organization for community events actively strengthens community ties amongst the practitioner group. It also contributes to the ongoing development of multiple community identities amongst the participating members. In other words it can be seen as contributing to the constitution of changes to community life as a whole and particularly to future festival organization.

References

Aldskogius, H. (1993) *Festivals and Meets: the place of music in 'Summer Sweden'*, Geografiska Annaler, Series B, Human Geography Vol.75 No.2 pp. 55-72

Alvesson, M. (2003) *Methodology for close-up studies – struggling with closeness and closure*, Higher Education 46 pp 167-193

Bakhtin M.M. (1984) *Rabelais and his World*. Indiana University Press

Barley, S.R. and Kunda, G. (2001) *Bringing Work Back In*, Organisation Science, Vol 12, No.1 Jan-Feb, pp.76-95

- Bourdieu, P (1977) *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge UK.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984) *Distinction*. Routledge, Abingdon, Oxon.
- Bourdieu, P (1990) *The Logic of Practice*. Stanford University Press. Stanford CA
- Costa, X. (2001) *Festivity: Traditional and Modern Forms of Sociability*, Social Compass 48(4) pp541-548
- Crespi-Vallbona, M and Richards, G. (2007) *The meaning of cultural festivals – stakeholder perspectives in Catalunya*, International Journal of Cultural Policy Vol. 13, No 1
- De Bres, K. and Davis, J. (2001) *Celebrating group and place identity: a case study of a new regional festival*, Tourism Geographies 3 (3) pp 326-337
- Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S.(2011) *Introduction to Part V: The art and practices of interpretation, evaluation and representation*, The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research (4th ed). SAGE Publications Inc., Thousand Oaks, California
- Ekman, A-K. (1999) *The revival of cultural celebrations in rural Sweden. Aspects of tradition and transition*, Sociologia Ruralis Vol. 39 No 3
- Falassi, A.(ed) (1987) *Time Out of Time: Essays on the Festival*, University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, NM.
- Feldman, M.S. and Orlikowski, W.J. (2011) *Theorizing Practice and Practicing Theory*. Organization Science. Vol 22 No 5 pp1240-1253
- Getz D, Andersson T. and Carlsen J. (2010) *Festival management studies: developing a framework and priorities for comparative and cross-cultural research*. International Journal of Event and Festival Management Vol 1 No 1 pp.29-59
- Giddens, A. (1976) *New Rules of Sociological Method*. Hutchinson. London UK
- Giddens, A.(1979) *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis*. Macmillan. Basingstoke UK
- Giddens, A.(1984) *The Constitution of Society*. Polity Press. Cambridge UK
- Gieryn, T.F. (2000) *A Space for Place in Sociology*, Annual Review of Sociology, Vol. 26 pp 463-496
- Jackson, P. (1988) *Street Life: the politics of carnival*, Environment and Planning D: Society and Space 6, pp213-227

- Lewis, C. and Pile, S. (1996) *Woman, body, space: Rio carnival and the politics of performance*, Gender, Place and Culture 3: 23-41
- Linstead, S. (1997) *The Social Anthropology of Management*. British Journal of Management. Vol 8 pp.85-98
- Lucas, M.J. (2012b) *Parallel journeys: an auto-ethnographic account of how a change of place impacts on our conceptions of community, identity and practice* (conference paper accepted for SCOS 2012)
- Marston, S. (1989) *Public rituals and community power: St. Patrick's Day parades in Lowell, Massachusetts 1841-1874*, Political Geography Quarterly 8: 255-269
- Moeran, B. (2009) *From participant observation to observant participation in Organizational Ethnography*, Ybema, S., Yanow, D., Wels, H., and Kamsteeg, F. (eds.).pp.139-155 SAGE Publications Ltd., London
- Nicolini, D. (2009) *Zooming in and zooming out: A package of method and theory to study work practices in Organizational Ethnography*, Ybema, S., Yanow, D., Wels, H., and Kamsteeg, F. (eds.).pp.120-138 SAGE Publications Ltd., London
- Orlikowski, W.J (2010) *Practice in Research: Phenomenon, perspective and philosophy in The Cambridge Handbook of Strategy as Practice*, Golsorkhi, D., Rouleau, L., Seidl, D., Vaara, E.(eds) pp23-33. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge,UK.
- Quinn, B. (2003) *Symbols, practices and myth-making: cultural perspectives on the Wexford Festival Opera*, Tourism Geographies 5(3) pp 329-349
- Schatzki, T.R. (2001) *Introduction: Practice Theory* in T.R.Schatzki, K.K.Cetina and E.Savigny (eds) *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*. Routledge. London UK
- Schatzki, T.R. (2005) *Peripheral Vision: The sites of organizations*. Organization Studies 26(3) pp. 465-484